

Member's Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

During each session of Congress, each Member has a single Members' Representational Allowance (MRA) available to support the conduct of official and representational duties to the district from which elected. Ordinary and necessary expenses incurred by the Member or the Member's employees within the United States, its territories, and possessions in support of the conduct of the Member's official and representational duties to the district from which elected are reimbursable in accordance with the regulations contained in this Members' Congressional Handbook.

Ordinary and necessary means reasonable expenditures in support of official and representational duties to the district from which elected that are consistent with all applicable federal laws, Rules of the House of Representatives, and regulations of the Committee on House Administration.

The following regulations of the Committee on House Administration, collectively known as the Members' Congressional Handbook (Handbook), govern all expenditures from the MRA.

The Handbook regulations are guidelines that assist Members in determining whether expenses are reimbursable. Therefore, the Handbook contains broad descriptions of reimbursable expenses, but is not an exhaustive list of such expenses.

Questions about reimbursement of an expense should be directed to the Committee on House Administration at x58281 prior to incurring the expense.

Reimbursement will not be allowed for expenses that are specifically prohibited.

For all questions relating to equipment and equipment-related issues, refer to the User's Guide to Purchasing Equipment, Software, and Related Services, available from the Committee on House Administration.

Routine administrative requests (equipment, computer services, etc.) should be directed to the appropriate administrative offices under the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). For further information relating to any of the CAO's services, please refer to the CAO's Web site on the Intranet (<http://onlinecao.house.gov/>) or call First Call/One Call at x58000.

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MEMBERS' REPRESENTATIONAL ALLOWANCE

General

When an expense is incurred, the Member must determine the primary purpose for the expenditure. Is the primary purpose for the expenditure official and representational? Or is it primarily related to personal, political, campaign, or committee activities? Only expenses the primary purpose of which are official and representational and which are incurred in accordance with the Handbook are reimbursable.

1. The MRA may only be used for official and representational expenses.
2. A Member may expend personal funds in support of his official and representational duties.
3. The MRA may not be used to pay for any expenses related to activities or events which are primarily social in nature.

4. The MRA may not pay for personal expenses.
5. The MRA may not pay for campaign expenses.
6. The MRA may not pay for political expenses.
7. The MRA may not pay for committee expenses.
8. Committee resources may not pay for a Member's official and representational expenses.
9. Campaign funds may not pay for a Member's official and representational expenses.
10. A Member may not maintain, or have maintained for his use, an unofficial office account for the purpose of defraying or reimbursing ordinary and necessary expenses incurred in support of a Member's official and representational duties.
11. A Member may not accept from any private source in kind support having monetary value for an official activity.
12. Only appropriated funds, not personal or unofficial funds, may be used to pay for mail sent under the frank.
13. Each Member is personally responsible for the payment of any official and representational expenses incurred that exceed the provided MRA or that are incurred but are not reimbursable under these regulations.
14. Unless specifically authorized by an applicable provision of federal law, House Rules, or Committee Regulations, no Member, relative of the Member, or anyone with whom the Member has a professional or legal relationship may directly benefit from the expenditure of the MRA.
15. The MRA is available for services provided and expenses incurred from January 3 of one year through January 2 of the following year. All expenses incurred will be charged to the allowance available on the date the services were provided or the expenses were incurred.
16. The MRA is not transferable between years.
17. Requests to obligate prior year's funds after January 2 of the succeeding year will be considered by the Committee when a Member provides documentation demonstrating a bona fide intent to obligate the prior year's funds during the applicable year.

Budgeting and Disclosure

The Committee recommends that each Member establish an annual budget for the MRA. To assist in this process, the Office of Finance sends each Member monthly statements showing year-to-date expenditures and obligated amounts. The quarterly expenditures reflected in these statements are compiled and published as the Quarterly Statement of Disbursements, which is a public document.

Disbursements

Disbursements from the MRA are made on a reimbursable or direct payment basis and require specific documentation and Member certification as to accuracy and compliance with applicable federal laws, House Rules, and Committee Regulations.

Reimbursements and payments from the MRA may be made only to the Member, the Member's employees, or a vendor providing services to support the operation of the Member's offices.

See Disbursements (42).

Incidental Use

Incidental personal use of equipment and supplies owned or leased by, or the cost of which is reimbursed by, the House of Representatives is permitted only when such use is negligible in nature, frequency, time consumed, and expense.

For example, limited use of government resources to access the Internet, to send or receive personal e-mail, or to make personal phone calls is permissible, so long as the use meets the above criteria, and otherwise conforms with the Regulations of the Committee on House Administration and the Code of Official Conduct (House Rule XXIV).

A Member office may adopt a more restrictive incidental use policy.

Overspending

Each member is personally responsible for the payment of any official and representational expenses incurred that exceed the provided MRA. If a Member incurs an obligation to the U.S. House of Representatives and the amount of the obligation incurred exceeds the MRA, the Member shall pay the obligation from personal funds. If the Member fails to pay the obligation voluntarily, the CAO will deduct the amount owed from any pay, mileage, or expense money due to the Member in the case of a sitting Member or through an administrative offset or legal action in the case of a former Member. The Office of Finance will notify a Member if that Member is projected to overspend the MRA.

Contact the Office of Finance at x57474 or the Committee on House Administration at x58281 for assistance with accounting and budgeting.

Telecommuting

Ordinary and necessary telecommuting expenses incurred in compliance with the Committee on House Administration telecommuting policy are reimbursable. Offices may obtain a copy of the Telecommuting policy and agreement by [clicking here](#).

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STAFF

General

Each Member is the employing authority; the Member determines the terms and conditions of employment and service for their staff. These terms and conditions must be consistent with applicable federal laws and House Rules.

1. Personnel actions affecting employment positions in the House of Representatives must be free from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including marital or parental status), service in the military, disability, or age.
2. A Member may not retain an employee on the Member's payroll who does not perform official duties commensurate with the compensation received for the offices of the employing authority. (House Rule XXIV, clause 8(a)).
3. Employee means an individual appointed to a position of employment in the House of Representatives by an authorized employing authority including individuals receiving pay disbursed by the CAO and individuals in a Leave Without Pay or Furlough status.
4. Staff means all individuals including employees, fellows, unpaid interns, and volunteers who serve in the office of a Member.
5. Annual rates of pay may not exceed the amount specified in the Speaker's Pay Order.
6. Total compensation in any month including any lump sum and regular pay (including cash reimbursement for accrued annual leave) may not exceed 1/12th of the maximum rate of pay specified in the Speaker's Pay Order.
7. Retroactive pay adjustments are not authorized.
8. Government contributions to retirement, life insurance, Thrift Savings Plan, and health benefits programs are not charged to the MRA.
9. Each month, Member Offices receive a Payroll Certification Form from the Office of Human Resources that lists the annual pay and gross pay earned for each employee. If an employee is a relative of a current Member of Congress, the nature of the relationship to the Member must be noted on the Payroll Certification Form. The Member must certify the information and return the form to the Office of Human Resources no later than the 18th day of the month. Contact Human Resources at x51435 for payroll forms.

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Categories of Staff

Employee Ceiling

Under 2 U.S.C. § 92 each Member of the House of Representatives may employ 18 permanent employees and 4 additional employees. The 4 additional employees must be appointed to one of the following categories:

1. Interns
2. Part-time employees
3. Shared employees

4. Temporary employees

5. Employees on leave without pay

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Employees

The term employee means an individual appointed to a position of employment in the House of Representatives by an authorized employing authority including individuals receiving pay disbursed by the CAO and individuals in a Leave Without Pay or Furlough status.

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Interns

Interns, paid or unpaid, must perform services for the Member as part of a demonstrated educational plan. Each Member is responsible for determining the activities of the Member's interns.

Paid interns may work for no more than 120 days in a 12-month period and are not employees for purposes of compliance with the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. The gross annual rate of intern pay (\$21,600) is established by the Committee on House Administration. For the current applicable rate, contact the Committee on House Administration at x58281.

In regard to unpaid interns, Members must comply with the rules and regulations established by the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct (x57103).

Interns are ineligible for the following benefits:

1. Federal Employees' Retirement System
2. Federal life insurance
3. Federal health insurance
4. Thrift Savings Plan

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Part-time Employees

The term part-time employee means an individual who is employed by the Member and whose normally assigned work schedule is not more than the equivalent of 15 full working days per month.

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Temporary Employees

The term temporary employee means an individual who is employed for a specific purpose or task and who is employed for not more than 90 days in a 12-month period, except that the term of such employment may be extended with the written approval of the Committee on House Administration.

Temporary employees are ineligible for the following benefits:

1. Federal Employees' Retirement System
2. Federal life insurance
3. Federal health insurance
4. Thrift Savings Plan

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Shared Employees

The term shared employee means an employee who is paid by more than one employing authority of the House of Representatives.

1. Two or more employing authorities of the House may employ an individual.
2. Such shared employees must work out of the office of an employing authority, but are not required to work in the office of each employing authority. The pay from each employing authority shall reflect the duties actually performed for each employing authority. The name, title, and pay of such an individual will appear on each employing authority's Payroll Certification. Such employees may not receive pay totaling more than the highest rate of basic pay in the Speaker's Pay Order applicable to the positions they occupy.
3. Employees may not be shared between a Member or Committee office and the office of an Officer of the House if the employee, in the course of duties for an Officer, has access to the financial information, payroll information, equipment account information, or information systems of either Member, Committee, or Leadership offices.

See Dual Compensation (10).

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Employees on Leave Without Pay

See Leave Without Pay (14).

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Annuitants

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Civilian Annuitant

If a Member employs a Federal civil service annuitant, the amount of the annual annuity, when added to the annual rate of pay at which the employee is to be paid by the Member, may not exceed the highest rate of basic pay as authorized

by the Speaker's Pay Order. The combined total of the civil service annuity and the amount of the salary will be charged to the MRA.

Waivers

Member offices will not be granted waivers of applicable annuity reductions or pay reductions.

Consultants

Only committees are authorized, pursuant to 2 U.S.C. § 72a, to procure the temporary services of consultants.

Consultants are not authorized for Member Offices.

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Contractors

Members may contract with firms or individuals only for general, non-legislative, office services (e.g. equipment maintenance, systems integration, data entry, staff training, photography, custodial services) for a specific, limited period not to exceed the Member's term. Such contracts are reimbursable. Such contractors are not employees of the House and are ineligible for government-provided benefits.

Contractors do not count against the Member's Employee Ceiling.

Members are advised to consult the Committee on House Administration when entering into such contracts.

See Custodial Services (23), Educational Expenses (16), Interpreting and Translation Services (18), Temporary Agencies (7), and Web Sites (36).

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Detailees

The term detailee means a non-Congressional federal employee assigned to a committee for a period of up to one year.

Detailees may not be assigned to a Member office (2 U.S.C. §72a(f)).

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Fellows

The term fellow means an individual performing services in a House office on a temporary basis as part of an established mid-career education program while continuing to receive the usual compensation from his or her sponsoring employer.

Fellows may be assigned to a Member office.

Fellows do not count against the Member's Employee Ceiling.

The use of fellows is subject to regulations established by the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct. Contact the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct at x57103.

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Temporary Agencies

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to services provided by an individual employed by a temporary agency are reimbursable if the following conditions are met:

1. Payment for such services is commensurate with the official duties performed by the individual.
2. Such an individual remains an employee of the agency and is not eligible for pay, benefits, rights, or privileges available to House employees.
3. The total of such individuals and employees may not exceed 22 individuals.

See Contractors (7).

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Volunteers

The term volunteer means an individual performing services in a House office without compensation from any source.

The voluntary service should be of significant educational benefit to the participant and such voluntary assistance should not supplant the normal and regular duties of paid employees.

Volunteers should be required to agree, in advance and in writing, to serve without compensation. (31 U.S.C. § 1342 & Comp. Gen. Op. B69907).

Volunteers do not count against the Member's Employee Ceiling.

The use of volunteers is subject to regulations established by the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct. Contact the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct at x57103.

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Employment Law

Congressional Accountability Act

Pursuant to the Congressional Accountability Act House employing offices are accountable under the following laws:

1. Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938
2. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
3. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
4. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967
5. The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993
6. The Employee Polygraph Protection Act of 1988
7. Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act
8. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973
9. Veterans' Reemployment Rights
10. Federal Labor-Management Relations
11. The public service and accommodations provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act
12. The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970

The Office of Compliance has published A Guide to the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995, which is available from the Office of Compliance, Room LA-200, John Adams Building, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540-1999, (202) 724-9250. The Office of Compliance also provides materials that employing offices can use to notify employees of their rights and protections under the CAA.

A Model Employee Handbook providing sample office policies to assist in developing an organization that complies with applicable laws and House Rules is available on the House Intranet Web Site: <http://intranet.house.gov/>

The Office of House Employment Counsel is available to provide advice and guidance on employment matters generally, and on establishing office policies consistent with these laws, x57075.

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Nepotism

1. Under the federal statute prohibiting nepotism (5 U.S.C. § 3110) the term public official includes: a Member, an employee and any other individual, in whom is vested the authority by law, rule, or regulation, or to whom the authority has been delegated, to appoint, employ, promote, or advance individuals, or to recommend individuals for appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement.

2. Such a public official may not appoint, employ, promote, advance or advocate for appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement in or to a position in the office in which that public official is serving or over which that public official exercises jurisdiction or control any individual who is a relative of that public official.

3. Every employee must certify relationship to any Member of Congress on a certificate of relationship form available from Human Resources. If, at any time, the relationship of an employee to any current Member of Congress changes the employee must file an amended certificate of relationship form with the employing office. Contact Human Resources at x51435 for such forms.

4. Individuals with the following relationship to the Member may not be employed by the Member:

Aunt

Half-sister

Son-in-law

Brother

Husband

Stepbrother

Brother-in-law

Mother

Stepdaughter

Daughter

Mother-in-law

Stepfather

Daughter-in-law

Nephew

Stepmother

Father

Niece

Stepsister

Stepson

Father-in-law

Sister

First cousin

Sister-in-law

Uncle

Half-brother

Son

Wife

However, if a House employee becomes related to the employing Member (by marriage) the employee may remain on the Member's personal or committee payroll. Similarly, if a Member becomes the employing authority of a relative who was hired by someone else (e.g., the Member ascends to the chairmanship of a Committee or subcommittee for which the relative is already working) the relative may remain on the payroll. However, the Member may not then give that individual further promotions or raises, other than cost-of-living or other across-the-board adjustments.

The statute does not prohibit a Member from employing two individuals who are related to each other but not to the Member (See, House Ethics Manual, pp. 187 and 188).

Contact the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct at x57103 for further information.

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Non-Disclosure Oath

House Rule XLIII, clause 13, requires Members and employees to execute an oath of non-disclosure before having access to classified information.

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Post-Employment Restriction

Members and employees paid at a rate equal to or greater than 75% of the basic rate of pay of a Member for at least 60 days in the one-year period preceding termination are subject to post-employment restrictions. For the current applicable rate and information regarding the applicable restrictions, contact the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, Office of Advice and Education, at x57103.

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Working from Home due to a Disability

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a Member may reasonably accommodate a qualified employee with a disability by allowing the employee to work at home. As a condition of such a request, the Member may require certification from a physician of the need for such accommodation.

See Congressional Accountability Act (8) and Telecommunications (21).

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Pay

Appointment

The official appointment of each employee requires the Member's signature on the payroll authorization form. Required payroll forms must be received by Human Resources no later than the last business day of the month in which the appointment is effective. Subsequent adjustments to a payroll appointment (pay adjustments, title changes, furlough status, terminations, etc.) must also be made on the appropriate forms. Such forms are due at Human Resources by the 18th day of the month in which the adjustment is effective.

Dual Compensation

The aggregate gross annual salary of an employee receiving payment from the House who is also receiving payment from the U.S. Senate, Architect of the Capitol, or any other department or agency of the U.S. Government, may not exceed the gross annual rate established by 5 U.S.C. §5533. For the current applicable dual compensation rate, contact the Office of Human Resources, Payroll Department, at x5-1435.

Financial Disclosure

Members and employees receiving basic pay at a rate equal to or greater than 120 percent of the minimum pay for GS-15 for at least 60 days during any calendar year must file a Financial Disclosure Statement upon appointment, termination, and annually on May 15th. For the current applicable rate, contact the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, Office of Advice and Education at x57103.

Each Member's office that does not have an employee paid at or above the threshold must designate one employee as the "Principal Assistant" who must file a Financial Disclosure Statement.

Ordinary and necessary expenses incurred by Members and their employees, in support of the filing of reports consistent with the provisions of the Ethics in Government Act, are reimbursable.

Contact the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct at x57103.

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Lump Sum Payments

A Member may authorize a lump sum payment to an employee for any purpose consistent with the following:

1. Payments must be consistent with House Rule XXIV, clause 8(a), which requires that employees perform official duties commensurate with the compensation received. Employees may not be compensated from public funds to perform non-official, personal, political, or campaign activities on behalf of the Member, the employee, or anyone else.
2. A lump sum payment may not be more than the monthly pay of the employee receiving the lump sum payment.
3. Lump sum payments may be for services performed during more than one month.
4. Members may provide lump sum payments for accrued annual leave only if such leave was accrued in accordance with written personnel policies established prior to the accrual of such leave.
5. Total compensation in any month including any lump sum payment and regular pay (including cash reimbursement for accrued annual leave) may not exceed 1/12th of the maximum rate of pay specified in the Speaker's Pay Order.
6. Lump Sum Payments will be disclosed separately in the Quarterly Statement of Disbursements.
7. Lump sum payments are considered as part of "rate of pay" under the Speaker's Pay Order.
8. Lump sum payments are considered "supplemental wages" for taxation.
9. Lump sum payments are not considered as part of "basic pay" for calculating Thrift Savings Plan, life insurance, and

federal pensions.

10. Contact the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct at x57103 for information on the treatment of lump-sum payments with regard to financial disclosure, post-employment restrictions, and outside earned income limitations.

See Pay Adjustments (12).

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Outside Earned Income

Members and employees receiving basic pay at a rate equal to or greater than 120 percent of the minimum basic pay for GS-15 for at least 90 days in a calendar year are subject to the outside earned income limitation established by 5 U.S.C. app 4 § 501 (a)(1) and House Rule 25, cl. 1 (a)(1).

For the current applicable rate of basic pay, the amount of the limit and application of the House Rule, contact the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, Office of Advice and Education, at x57103.

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Overtime Wage Rate Compensation

Employees who are covered by the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act ("non-exempt") must be compensated at time-and-a half for all hours worked in excess of 40 hours during any work week, either in pay or in time-off during the same pay period in accordance with consistently applied office personnel policies.

Overtime wage sheets must be received by Human Resources no later than the 18th day of the month following the month in which overtime wages were earned.

Contact Human Resources at x52450 for the appropriate forms.

Contact the Office of House Employment Counsel at x57075 for assistance in establishing overtime and time-off policies.

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Pay Adjustments

Members may adjust, in any month, an employee's pay to reflect exceptional, meritorious, or less than satisfactory service.

Such adjustments must be received by Human Resources by the 18th day of the month in which the adjustment is to be effective.

Retroactive pay adjustments are not authorized.

See Lump Sum Payments (11).

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Payroll Schedule

The monthly payroll is based on a 30-day pay period. (5 U.S.C. §5505).

Payment is made on the last business day of the month. (5 U.S.C. §5505).

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Rates of Compensation

Members are responsible for adhering to the applicable minimum wage provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (\$5.15 per hour as of September 1, 1997).

Interns are not employees for purposes of compliance with the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

The maximum rate of pay established for Member Offices by Order of the Speaker is \$153,022 as of January 1, 2004 .

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Terminations

Terminations must be made on a Payroll Authorization Form and submitted to Human Resources as soon as the date of termination is known. If the termination notice is received by Human Resources after the 18th day of the month, the payroll check for that month may have already been processed. If an employee is overpaid, the Member is responsible for obtaining reimbursement.

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Leave

General

The Member determines the terms and conditions of employment, including provisions for leave (e.g. Annual, Administrative, and Sick).

Contact the Office of House Employment Counsel at x57075 for model leave policies.

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Family and Medical Leave (FMLA)

A person employed by the House for at least one year and for a total of at least 1,250 hours during the previous 12-month period is entitled to up to a total of 12 weeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period for the following family and medical reasons:

1. For the birth of a child and to care for the newborn child.
2. To adopt a child or to receive a child in foster care.
3. To care for a spouse, son, daughter, or parent who has a serious health condition.
4. For the employee's own serious health condition which makes the employee unable to perform the functions of his or her job. (29 U.S.C. § 2601 et seq.)

Employees on Family and Medical Leave remain eligible for all benefits.

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Furlough

Furlough is an absence without pay initiated by the Member. Placement in Furlough status is at the discretion of the Member, unless statute otherwise requires placement in such status.

1. To be eligible for appointment to Furlough status at the discretion of the Member, an employee must have been employed by the Member for the entire month prior to the effective date of Furlough status.
2. An employee placed in a Furlough status continues to fill an employee position. The name of such employees will be listed on the monthly payroll certification forms.
3. Continuation of employee benefits while in a Furlough status:
 - a. Health benefits enrollment and coverage may be continued for up to 12 months. However, to maintain such enrollment and coverage, an employee placed in a Furlough status is responsible for the payment of the employee's portion of the insurance premium for the period of the Furlough status, either by direct payment or by incurring a debt to the House. Employees should contact Human Resources for more information on applicable regulations.
 - b. Life insurance continues for up to 12 months without employee contribution.
 - c. Retirement coverage continues without employee contribution. Up to 6 months in a calendar year is credited for service in the annuity computation.
4. The placement of an employee in a Furlough status must be made on the appropriate form provided by Human Resources and received no later than the 18th day of the month in which the placement is to be effective. Contact Human Resources at x52450 for such forms.

Contact Human Resources at x52450 for information on employee benefits while on Furlough.

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Jury and Witness Duty

Under 2 U.S.C. § 130b, the pay of an employee shall not be reduced during a period of absence with respect to which the employee is summoned as a juror; or as a witness on behalf of any party in connection with any judicial proceeding to which the United States or a State or local government is a party.

An employee may not receive fees for service as juror in a court of the United States or the District of Columbia; or as a witness on behalf of the United States or the District of Columbia. If an employee receives an amount (other than travel expenses) for service as a juror or witness in such a court the employee must remit such amount to the Office of Finance for deposit in the general fund of the Treasury.

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Leave Without Pay (LWOP)

LWOP is an absence without pay. LWOP status is initiated by the employee and is subject to Member approval, unless statute otherwise requires placement in such leave status. To be eligible, an employee must have been employed by the Member for the entire month prior to the effective date of the LWOP status.

1. As a basic condition for approval of LWOP status, there should be a reasonable assurance that the employee will return to duty at the end of the approved period. Members are encouraged to contact the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct at x57103 prior to approving a LWOP status request to confirm that no conflict of interest issues exist.
2. LWOP status should be requested in advance of the period of absence.
3. LWOP status may not exceed 12 months in a 24-month period.
4. When an employee has been appointed to LWOP status, he or she continues to fill a payroll position. The name of such employees will be listed on the monthly payroll certification forms.
5. Continuation of Employee Benefits while on LWOP status:
 - a. Health benefits enrollment and coverage may be continued for up to 12 months. However, to maintain such enrollment and coverage, an employee placed in a LWOP status is responsible for the payment of the employee's portion of the insurance premium for the period of the LWOP status, either by direct payment or by incurring a debt to the House. Employees should contact Human Resources for more information on applicable regulations.
 - b. Life insurance continues for up to 12 months without employee contribution.
 - c. Retirement coverage continues without employee contribution. Up to 6 months in a calendar year is credited for service in the annuity computation.
6. The placement of an employee on LWOP status must be made on the payroll authorization form available from Human Resources and received by Human Resources no later than the 18th day of the month in which the placement is to be effective. Contact Human Resources at x52450 for such forms.

Contact Human Resources at x52450 for information on employee benefits while on LWOP.

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Military Leave

Employees who are members of a National Guard or Armed Forces Reserves unit are entitled to leave without loss in pay, time, or performance or efficiency rating for active duty or engaging in field or coast defense training as a Reserve of the armed forces or member of the National Guard. Leave accrues for an employee or individual at the rate of 15 days per fiscal year and, to the extent that it is not used in a fiscal year, accumulates for use in the succeeding fiscal year until it totals 15 days at the beginning of a fiscal year. (5 U.S.C. § 6323).

Contact the Office of House Employment Counsel for additional information on the rights, benefits, and obligations of individuals absent from employment for service in a uniformed service. (38 U.S.C. §§ 4317 - 4319).

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OFFICIAL & REPRESENTATIONAL EXPENSES

General

Appliances

Ordinary and necessary expenses for small appliances (microwaves, coffee makers, etc.) for use in the Member's congressional offices are reimbursable.

Equipment that exceeds \$500 in value must be added to the Member's office inventory.

Contact Office Systems Management at x53994 to revise an office inventory.

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An Artistic Discovery, The Congressional Art Competition

Ordinary and necessary expenses, within a category of authorized official and representational expenses, related to the congressional art competition, An Artistic Discovery, are reimbursable.

A Member may not mail An Artistic Discovery entry under the Frank. Shipping An Artistic Discovery entry by means other than the Frank is reimbursable.

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Certificates

Certificates of recognition to a person who has achieved some public distinction for distribution in connection with official and representational duties are reimbursable.

Certificates must comply with the Franking Regulations.

Contact the Franking Commission at x59337.

See Gifts and Donations (17).

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Clipping Services

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to clipping services (newspapers, periodicals, magazines, etc.) are reimbursable.

See Publications (20).

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Decorating Expenses

Decorations of nominal value (such as frames, bookends, flags, seals, etc.) for Congressional offices are reimbursable.

Contact the Committee on House Administration at x58281 for a list of government agencies that provide wall decorations free of charge.

See Framing (17) and Furniture (17).

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Deposits

Security and other deposits are not reimbursable and must be paid from the Member's personal funds. Each Member should notify vendors that any return of deposits should be made to the Member.

See Advance Payments (42), District Office Leases (23), Booths (27), and Officially Leased Vehicles (40).

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Drug Testing

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to drug testing, in accordance with the Member's written drug-testing policy, are reimbursable.

Offices should consult with the Office of House Employment Counsel at x57075 when establishing drug-testing policies.

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Dues

Dues, membership fees, assessments, and annual fees are not reimbursable. (5 U.S.C. § 5946).

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Educational Expenses

Ordinary and necessary expenses for Members or employees to attend conferences, seminars, briefings, professional training, and informational programs related to the official and representational duties to the district from which elected are reimbursable.

1. Members or employees may not be reimbursed for expenses to attend educational programs in order to obtain a primary, secondary, graduate, post-graduate, or professional degree.
2. Expenses associated with acquiring or maintaining professional certification or licensing are not reimbursable.

See Advance Payments (42) and Contractors (7).

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Employment-Related Expenses

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to filling employment vacancies are reimbursable.

The following expenses are not reimbursable:

1. Transportation to and from employment interviews.

2. Relocation expenses upon acceptance or termination of employment.
3. Relocation expenses incidental to a change in duty station.

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Flags

U.S. flags for purchase by individuals may be obtained by a Member from the Office Supply Service (OSS) (x53321). Initially, the costs of the flags will be charged to the MRA. Once payment for a flag is received by the Member office, the office may submit the check to OSS. OSS will credit the Member's account.

If a request is made to have a U.S. flag flown over the Capitol, an additional flag flying fee must be paid by the individual purchasing the flag. See Gifts and Donations (17).

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Food and Beverage Expenses

Members and employees may be reimbursed for food and beverage expenses incidental to an official and representational meeting that includes a person(s) who is not a Member or employee of the House.

Members and employees may not be reimbursed for food and beverage expenses related to social activities or social events (e.g. hospitality, receptions, entertainment, holiday or personal celebrations, and swearing-in or inauguration day celebrations).

Members and employees may not be reimbursed for the cost of alcoholic beverages.

See Town Hall Meetings (21).

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Framing

Framing services for items to be displayed in the Member's Congressional offices are reimbursable. In Washington, D.C., when a Member uses the in-House framing service provided by the CAO, charges will be automatically charged to the MRA.

See Decorating Expenses (16) and Gifts and Donations (17).

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Furniture

Furniture (furniture, carpet, drapes, etc. (including repairs) for Washington, D.C., congressional offices are supplied and maintained by the CAO through the Offices Services (x53994) without charge to the MRA. Furniture for the Washington, D.C., congressional offices is not reimbursable.

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Gifts and Donations

Only the following gifts and donations are reimbursable:

1. Items purchased for official presentation when on official travel for the House of Representatives outside the United States, its territories and possessions. To purchase items from the House Gift Shop, select the item(s) and notify the sales clerk that it is for official presentation business in the course of overseas travel. Receipts for such items should be vouchered for payment to the Office Supply Service, and the voucher description should note that it is for official presentation in the course of overseas travel.
2. U.S. flags flown over the Capitol for official presentation as a gift, including the flag flying fee, are reimbursable. Such flags must be for the personal use of or display by the recipient. Donations of flags purchased through the MRA for fundraising activities are prohibited.
3. Ordinary and necessary costs associated with the purchase of presentation folders or frames, which are of nominal value.
4. Informational and educational federal government publications of nominal value.
5. U.S. Capitol Historical society publications of nominal value (including calendars).

No other gifts or donations are reimbursable.

See Flags (16), Certificates (15), Framing (17), Congressional Record (20), Printing and Production (33), Photography Expenses (20), and Postal Expenses (33).

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Greetings

Expenses related to the purchase or distribution of greetings, including holiday celebrations, condolences, and congratulations for personal distinctions (wedding anniversaries, birthdays, etc.), are not reimbursable.

See the Franking Regulations, available from the Franking Commission at x59337 for information on recognition of public distinction.

See Certificates (15).

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Insurance

A Member may be asked to provide a certificate of insurance for the purpose of entering into a lease for a district office or for securing space in which to conduct a town-hall meeting or other official and representational event. The House does not carry a private insurance policy and generally does not permit Members to use the MRA to pay for a private insurance policy.

Under the provisions of the Federal Tort Claims Act (28 U.S.C. § 2671-2680), the United States acts as a self-insurer and recognizes liability for the negligent and wrongful acts or omissions of its employees acting within the scope of their official and representational duties. The United States is liable to the same extent an individual would be in like circumstances.

Although the Federal Tort Claims Act is not the equivalent of private liability insurance, it does provide an aggrieved party with administrative recourse, and if that proves unsatisfactory, legal recourse for damage or injury sustained. Thus, to the extent negligent acts of Members or congressional staff, while conducting official and representational duties, result in either property damage or bodily injury, such damage or injury should be compensable under the Act in a manner that affords protection similar to private liability insurance.

However, if the provisions of the Federal Tort Claims Act are not considered adequate, the ordinary and necessary expenses for liability insurance to cover these risks are reimbursable. When a compensable event occurs, the deductible portion of a policy may be paid from the MRA.

The expenses of fire and theft insurance are not reimbursable.

Contact the Office of the General Counsel at x59700 for guidance regarding the Federal Tort Claims Act.

See Officially Leased Vehicles (40).

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Interpreting and Translating Services

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to interpreting and translating services, including accommodations under the

ADA, are reimbursable.

For events held in House Office Buildings contact the Congressional Special Services Office at x44048 and the Office of ADA Services at x53005 for assistance.

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Late Fees

Ordinary and necessary fees related to late payments incurred beyond the control of the Member are reimbursable.

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Mass Transit Benefit

Members and staff in Washington, DC or the district are eligible for a mass transit benefit. For information regarding this benefit, please contact CAO First Call at x58000.

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Messenger Services

Ordinary and necessary expenses for messenger services related to the Member's official and representational duties are reimbursable.

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Parking

1. Each Member is provided one garage parking permit for the Member's use; at the prerogative of the Member, this permit may be assigned to staff. In addition, each Member is provided five indoor garage parking permits and two outdoor lot parking permits.

a. Garage parking spaces may be reserved. If a space is reserved by an authorized permit holder, the permit holder incurs additional taxable income as a working condition fringe benefit. Under the tax code and IRS regulations, Members and their staff have imputed taxable income to the extent that the fair market value of Government-provided parking exceeds \$175.00/month (the value of the parking space is subject to future adjustments).

b. When a garage space is reserved, the Director of House Garages and Parking Security will notify Human Resources. Government-provided parking includes the combined value of parking spaces in Washington, D.C., and the district. Contact Human Resources at x52450 to make appropriate tax withholdings.

2. At the beginning of each Congress, the Office of House Garages and Parking Security will send parking permit application forms to each Member's office. The Member should designate on the forms, to whom garage or outside parking space permits are to be issued, and with regard to a garage space, whether the space is to be assigned on a reserved or unreserved basis. The application forms must include the individual's name, House of Representatives ID number (where applicable), the model, color, and year of the individual's automobile, and the automobile license number and state.

3. All offices must retrieve parking permits from departing staff. Additionally, offices must notify House Garages and Parking Security of any transfers or changes in permit assignments. Notifications should be in writing on official letterhead and include the Member's signature.

4. The House of Representatives will not be liable for any damage caused to or theft of any motor vehicle or the contents thereof while parked on a House parking lot when that lot is not attended.

Contact the Committee on House Administration at x58281.

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Photography Expenses

Ordinary and necessary photography expenses related to a Member's official and representational duties, including but not limited to, the Member's official photo, official photographs for distribution to constituents, and photograph presentation folders and frames of nominal value, are reimbursable.

In Washington, D.C., contact the House Photography Studio at x52840 for services, charges, and availability.

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Publications

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to purchasing or subscribing to publications, including but not limited to research materials, reference books, informational brochures, electronic services, or periodicals are reimbursable.

All invoices for subscriptions received by the Office of Finance through the close of business January 2, will be debited

from the current MRA year. Subscriptions beginning on January 1 or 2, may be debited from either allowance year, as directed by the Member.

Subscriptions may exceed the Member's term. Subscriptions that exceed a Member's term in office will be assigned to the Member's successor.

See Advance Payments (42).

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Congressional Record

Costs related to providing Congressional Record subscriptions to constituents, private entities, or public entities are not reimbursable.

Offices are authorized to purchase additional copies of the Congressional Record, as necessary for office use.

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Staff Meetings

Members and staff may attend staff meetings at a Member-authorized location in the Member's State or in the Capitol Hill complex (U.S. Capitol, House and Senate Office Buildings, Library of Congress, U.S. Botanic Gardens, and the U.S. Supreme Court) for official and representational purposes, and may seek reimbursement for expenses relating to attendance at such meetings, provided that such expenses are otherwise consistent with all other Handbook regulations.

The MRA may not be used for social events or activities.

See Travel (37), Educational Expenses (16), Food and Beverage Expenses (17), and Contractors (7).

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Supplies

Office supplies to support the conduct of the Member's official and representational duties are reimbursable.

The Office Supply Store (OSS) is located in Room B-217 Longworth at x53321. OSS issues each Member an Account Card for official purchases, which may only be used by the Member and/or staff. The cost of all items purchased with the

Account Card is charged to the MRA.

Supplies for a Member's district office may be procured in the district through supply stores or through regional General Services Administration (GSA) supply centers.

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House Gift Shop

OSS also operates a gift shop in B-217A Longworth which sells souvenirs and mementos to Members, staff, and the public. Gift Shop purchases may be made by cash, check or credit card. A Member Account Card may not be used to purchase items at the Gift Shop.

Contact OSS for inquiries on special orders, deliveries, and OSS statements at x53321.

See Gifts and Donations (17).

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Telecommunications

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to the official use, including periodic or flat service fees, of telecommunications lines (voice and data) in the residence of a Member or employee are reimbursable. The cost of installation of such lines is not reimbursable.

See Advance Payments (42).

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Town Hall Meetings

A town hall meeting is an official meeting a Member holds within the Member's district with their constituents to facilitate the exchange of information regarding the Member's official and representational duties.

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to town hall meetings are reimbursable.

Ordinary and necessary expenses include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Advertisements

2. Rental of rooms, chairs, audio systems
3. Audio/Video Expenses
4. Interpreting Services
5. ADA Accommodations
6. Reporting and transcription services
7. Electronic Transmission (Not television)
8. Custodial Services
9. Signs/banners/leaflets/flyers that comply with the Franking Regulations
10. Security

Members may invite any Member of Congress to participate in their official town hall meeting. Travel expenses for a guest Member or Senator are reimbursable from the MRA of the host Member.

Town Hall Meeting notices should include a contact person to arrange for accommodations for persons with disabilities.

Members and employees may not accept, from any private source, in kind support having monetary value for a town hall meeting. Contact the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct at x57103.

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Joint Town Hall Meetings

Members may be reimbursed for ordinary and necessary expenses associated with holding joint town hall meetings with Members of the House of Representatives, representing adjacent districts or United States Senators representing the same state, as specified below.

1. Joint town hall meetings can be held in one of the Members' districts, in order to facilitate the exchange of information regarding the Member's official and representational duties.
2. Expenses (excluding mail) may be divided to reflect an accurate representation of each Member's expenses, and may be directly vouchered through the Office of Finance with supporting documentation (invitation, agenda, etc.) for the meeting.
3. 39 U.S.C. § 2910 prohibits Members from sending any mass mailings outside of the district from which elected. Therefore, Franked mail expenses that relate to advertising Joint Town Hall meetings must be separately accounted for and charged to the MRA of the Member into whose District the Franked mail was delivered.

See Advertisements (25), Food and Beverage Expenses (17), and Interpreting and Translation Services (18).

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Radio Town Hall Meetings

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to the purchase of radio broadcasting time to hold an "electronic" town hall meeting are reimbursable.

The radio station broadcasting the town hall meeting must serve the Member's district.

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District Office

Cable

Costs of cable television service in support of official and representational duties in the district office(s) are reimbursable.

See Deposits (16).

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Custodial Services

Ordinary and necessary expenses for custodial services for district office(s) are reimbursable.

See Contractors (7).

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Furniture

Furniture requests for district congressional offices are processed through Office Systems Management and charged to the MRA.

Offices should submit written requests to Office Systems Management, B-215 Longworth House Office Building prior to the purchase of any Furniture for district offices.

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Leases

Rental expenses related to district offices, except for security deposits, are reimbursable. There is no limit on the number and size of district offices a Member may establish. No lease may extend beyond the Member's elected term. Members must notify the Office of Finance at x57474 in writing when a lease is terminated.

District offices may be located in:

1. Federal buildings commercial buildings
2. State, county, or municipal buildings
3. Mobile district offices

District office space must be located within a Member's district unless there is no suitable office space in a federal building in the Member's district. In that event, a district office may be located in a federal building serving the Member's district.

Members may not accept free office space from private entities. Private office space must be leased at a fair market value as the result of a bona fide, arms-length, marketplace transaction.

All leases must include a House lease attachment. Leases and lease attachments must be submitted to the Office of Administrative Counsel (x56969) for review and processing. The Committee recommends that Members submit such leases for review prior to being signed by the Member and lessor, because the Member is personally liable for payments under any lease not in compliance with House Rules and Committee regulations.

The House will authorize disbursement of funds under the terms of the lease agreement only if the lease agreement complies with the Rules of the House and the Regulations of the Committee on House Administration. The House will not authorize disbursement of funds to make payments under the terms of the lease agreement until the Administrative Counsel has reviewed the lease agreement and has signed the Attachment. Similarly, the Administrative Counsel must review any proposed substantive amendment and sign the Attachment for the amendment before the House will authorize any payment pursuant to such an amendment. Any amendment to a lease agreement must be in writing.

The Committee on Standards of Official Conduct has ruled that Members may accept free office space, located in their district, when such space is provided by a federal, state, or local government agency.

Contact the Administrative Counsel at x56969 for lease standards.

See Deposits (16).

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Mobile District Offices

Mobile district offices must remain in the Member's district unless they are being stored, receiving maintenance and

repair, or traveling between points in the district.

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Parking

Parking should be negotiated as part of the district office lease. However, if parking is unavailable or insufficient through the district office lease, Members may negotiate a separate parking space lease and submit it to the Office of Administrative Counsel for review and processing.

Contact the Administrative Counsel at x56969 for lease standards.

Under the tax code and IRS regulations, Members and their staff have imputed taxable income to the extent that the fair market value of Government-provided parking exceeds \$190.00/month (the value of the parking space is subject to future adjustments). Government-provided parking includes the combined value of parking spaces in Washington, D.C., and the district.

Contact Human Resources at x52450 to make appropriate tax withholdings.

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Repairs

Ordinary and necessary expenses for minor office repairs that are the responsibility of the tenant, or cosmetic changes that are requested by the tenant and are not covered in the lease are reimbursable. The expenses of capital improvements to district offices are not reimbursable.

Contact the Office of Administrative Counsel at x56969 to determine if a repair qualifies as a minor office repair or cosmetic change.

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Security

Ordinary and necessary expenses associated with security measures in a Member's district office are reimbursable.

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Sharing Offices

A Member may share office space with Members of the United States Senate from the Member's state or with state and local officials, but all expenses (including rent, utilities, etc.) and space must be kept and billed separately. Members may not share district office space with other Members of the House of Representatives.

Contact Administrative Counsel at x56969 to submit such leases for review, and the Office of Finance at x57474 to establish billing arrangements.

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Signs

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to purchasing sign(s) to identify the location of a district office are reimbursable. Such signs may not include a picture or likeness of the Member and must state that the premises is a district congressional office. If a sign includes more than a Member's name and district, the content must comply with the Franking Regulations.

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Storage

Storage should be negotiated as part of the district office lease. However, if storage space is unavailable or insufficient within the district office space, Members may negotiate a separate storage space lease and submit it to the Office of Administrative Counsel for review and processing.

Contact the Administrative Counsel at x56969 for lease standards.

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Utilities

Utilities are reimbursable. They may be integral to the lease and included in the monthly rent, or may be vouchered separately, or processed through automatic payment.

Contact the Office of Finance at x57474 for information regarding automatic payment of utilities.

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Communications

Advertisements

Ordinary and necessary expenses related only to the following types of advertisements are reimbursable:

1. Notice of town hall meetings.
2. Personal appearance of the Member at an official event, which the Member sponsors and hosts in support of the conduct of the Member's official and representational duties to the district from which elected.
3. Notice relating to the nomination process to the U.S. Military Academies.
4. Notice relating to the congressional art competition, "An Artistic Discovery."
5. Notice of employee and internship openings.

Advertisements may not include a picture or likeness of the Member.

Advertisement must receive an Advisory Opinion from the Franking Commission.

Advertisements for town hall meeting may only contain the Member's name, general title of subject matter addressed, germane graphics, guests (if applicable), time, date, location of the meeting (if applicable), and contact.

Contact the Franking Commission at x59337.

There are restrictions on mass communications within 90 days of an election.

See Unsolicited Mass Communication Restrictions (35), Audio and Video Expenses (27), Town Hall Meetings (21), Employment-Related Expenses (16), Newspaper Inserts (33), Television (26), and Radio (26).

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Disclosure

Members must disclose, within the text of a television, radio and Internet advertisement, the source of payment for the official advertisements. Members may use any of the following:

1. "Paid for with official funds from the office of [Member's name]."
2. "Paid for by the funds authorized by the House of Representatives for the [district number] District of [name of state]."
3. "Paid for by official funds authorized by the House of Representatives."

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Internet

Members are authorized to purchase only advertisements within the five authorized categories on web pages that serve the Member's district. The advertisements may contain only text, and may link to a secondary page that contains only text relating to a category of authorized advertisement, and the secondary page may contain a link to the Member's home page.

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Radio

Ordinary and necessary expenses only for a radio advertisement within the five authorized categories are reimbursable.

The radio station broadcasting the advertisement or meeting must serve the Member's district.

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Television

Ordinary and necessary expenses only for a television advertisement within the five authorized categories are reimbursable.

A television advertisement may only contain text and voiceover. The television station broadcasting the advertisement must serve the Member's district.

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Audio and Video Expenses

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to audio and video recording and materials, including but not limited to the following, are reimbursable:

1. Production of public service announcements for distribution to the stations serving the Member's district.
2. Filming related to the appearance of a Member or the Member's employee at an official event.
3. Videotapes and transcripts of commercial broadcasts related to the Member or the Member's district for in-office use.
4. Videotapes that are produced by the Member or videotapes that are provided to a Member and authorized by the providing entity to be reproduced for official distribution.
5. Video teleconferencing services incurred in support of the Member's official and representational duties.

Except for town hall meeting announcements, the costs related to purchasing television broadcast time are not reimbursable.

In Washington, D.C., the House Recording Studio is available for audio and video services. Contact the House Recording Studio at x53941 for information on services, charges, and availability.

There are certain election-related restrictions on mass communications.

See Unsolicited Mass Communication Restrictions (35).

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Booths

Ordinary and necessary expenses associated with renting or outfitting a booth to provide public information directly related to the Member's official and representational duties are reimbursable.

See Advance Payments (42).

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Distribution of Publications

Private Publications

A Member may distribute a purely informational and instructional printed publication created by a private entity. If the private document is to be distributed under the Frank the document must comply with the Franking Regulations.

Contact the Franking Commission at x59337.

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Government Publications

A Member may distribute government publications.

A report, document, or publication distributed by a Member may not contain a notice that it is sent with "the compliments" of the Member. (44 U.S.C. §1106).

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Electronic Communications

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to electronic communications (Internet, fax machines, etc.) are reimbursable. All official electronic communication content must comply with the Franking Regulations.

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Subscribed E-mail updates

A subscribed e-mail update is an e-mail sent to individuals who have subscribed to an e-mail list. Members must notify individuals who subscribe to e-mail updates that the individual is authorizing the Member to send regular e-mail updates from the Member's office to the individual's e-mail account. All e-mail updates to subscribers must contain an option that enables the individual to unsubscribe from the e-mail list. Members may send subscribed e-mail updates without obtaining an advisory opinion.

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Non-subscribed E-mail updates

If each e-mail address used in a mass communication was not obtained with consent for subscribed e-mail updates, then the Member must receive a Franking Advisory prior to the distribution of the mass communication.

Please see Unsolicited Mass Communications Restrictions.

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Franked Mail

Postage expenses of Frankable mail are reimbursable in accordance with the regulations contained in this Members' Congressional Handbook.

Contents of official mailings paid for through the MRA are subject to the regulations of the Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards (Franking Commission)(x59337).

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Use of the Frank

1. Pursuant to the provisions of 39 U.S.C. §3210, each Member is entitled to the privilege of sending mail as Franked mail in order to assist and expedite the conduct of the official business, activities, and duties of the Congress of the United States. For information regarding the use of the Frank, refer to the Franking Regulations (available from the Franking Commission x59337).

2. Mail to be delivered outside the United States, its territories and possessions (other than mail matter bearing an APO or FPO address for delivery through the United States military mail system), is not eligible for distribution under the Frank and may be sent with stamps. In applicable circumstances the Member may also use the following:

a. For official mail to U.S. Embassies and missions abroad, the Department of State provides diplomatic pouch service. For information regarding this service, contact House Postal Operations at x53856.

b. House documents (committee hearings, reports, and prints) which are not available for purchase from the Government Printing Office, and which are to be sent to foreign countries, may be sent to the Library of Congress for forwarding through the Exchange and Gifts Division. For information regarding this program, contact the Library of Congress, Exchange and Gifts Division at x75243.

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Accounting for the use of the Frank in the Washington, D.C., Congressional Office

1. The Office of Finance assigns a 5-digit billing account number to each Member.
2. House Postal Operations assigns a bar code to each Member. The bar code must be printed on all letter-sized envelopes, postcards, Kraft envelopes and labels procured in support of the official and representational duties of the Member's Washington, D.C., office.
3. Mail collected by House Postal Operations for distribution via the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) will be accounted for by House Postal Operations' automated system. House Postal Operations prepares a monthly statement of postal charges for Franked mail they have processed and provides a copy of this statement to the Office of Finance who forwards it to the USPS. An informational copy is provided directly to the Member.
4. Direct District Office Pouch Service (DDOP) or orange bag is available to expedite mail between the Washington, D.C. and district congressional offices. The cost of DDOP service is charged at the Priority Mail rate and is accounted for by House Postal Operations.
5. The Open and Distribute service is available to expedite the delivery of first class mail between the Washington, D.C. office and district addresses. Each piece of mail sent via the Open and Distribute service is charged at the First Class Mail rate and is accounted for by House Postal Operations.
6. Non-permit mail processed by House Postal Operations for distribution via the USPS, (small packages, oversized envelopes, flags, etc.), will be accounted for by House Postal Operations. House Postal Operations prepares a monthly statement of postal charges for Franked mail they have processed and forwards it to the USPS. An informational copy is provided directly to the Member.

For information regarding the use of these services contact House Postal Operations at x53856.

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Bulk Standard Mailings in the Washington, D.C., Congressional Office

1. A bulk Standard Mailing (formerly third-class mail) is defined by the USPS as a mailing consisting of at least 200 pieces or weighing 50 or more pounds.
2. If bulk Standard Mailings are to be distributed directly by the Washington, D.C. office via the USPS, the Member must apply to use the G300 House mail permit number.
3. A bulk mailing distributed directly by the Washington, D.C., office via the USPS must be deposited at a U.S. Bulk Mail Acceptance Center and must be accompanied by a completed Statement of Mailing form (PS 3602R or PS 3605R Priority Drop Shipment) a copy of which should be retained by the Member's office.
4. Bulk mail processed by mail houses for distribution via the USPS will be accounted for on a Statement of Mailing form.
5. The mail houses will notify USPS of the charges incurred. Members should request that the mail houses provide an informational copy of these charges on PS 3602R forms directly to the Member. This will help in the completion of the quarterly mass mailing report Members submit to the Finance Office.

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Mass Mailings

A mass mailing is any unsolicited mailing of substantially identical content to more than 500 persons in a session of Congress.

Members may not send mass mailings outside of the district from which elected. (39 U.S.C. § 3210)

All mass mailings must receive an advisory opinion from the Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards (Franking Commission) prior to mailing.

Any printed material sent out as a mass mailing without a Franking Advisory Opinion is reimbursable only if the Franking Commission subsequently deems the mailing Frankable.

Federal law requires each mass mailing sent by a Member of Congress to display the following disclaimer:

"This mailing was prepared, published, and mailed at taxpayer expense."

The notice must appear prominently on the front page of a letter, on the front of the envelope or near the mailing panel, or on the first page of a self-mailer. It must appear horizontally and set apart from other text by lines of spacing and printed in type size not smaller than 7 point.

Member offices are required to submit a completed quarterly Mass Mail Reporting Form to the Office of Finance within 2 weeks after the closing of the reporting period. If the office did not send mass mail in that period, the form must still be submitted.

Mailing costs are disclosed in the quarterly Statement of Disbursements for the House. (2 U.S.C. §59h).

Contact the Franking Commission at x59337.

See Use of the Frank (28).

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District Office(s) Monthly Reporting

Each Member must provide a monthly accounting of Franked mail costs sent out of each of their district offices.

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Certification of Franked Mail

1. If a Member does not choose to use a postage meter to account for district office mail, the Member must account for Franked mail directly deposited to the USPS on the Member District Office Certification of Franked Mail form.
2. The Member District Office Certification of Franked Mail form must be completed by each district office on a monthly basis and received by the Office of Postal Operations for processing by the second business day following the end of the month. The submitted form must have the Member's original signature certifying its accuracy. The Office of Postal Operations will forward this information to the USPS.
3. If the Member District Office Certification of Franked Mail is 30 days delinquent the CAO will notify the Member. 30 days after notification of delinquency the Franked mail usage for the unreported month will be estimated and deducted from the MRA.

Member District Office Certification of Franked Mail forms are available from Postal Operations, x53856.

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Postage Meters

1. As an alternative to the Member District Office Certification of Franked Mail form, Members may account for their Franked mail via a postage meter.
2. Members must contact Office Systems Management at x53994 prior to procuring a postage meter.
3. At the end of each month, the postage meter vendor will forward a statement of the applicable postage charges for the month directly to the USPS and will provide an informational copy of this statement to the Member's Washington, D.C. Congressional office.

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Bulk Standard Mailings in the District Office

1. A bulk Standard Mailing (formerly third-class mail) is defined by the USPS as a mailing consisting of at least 200 pieces or weighing 50 or more pounds.
2. A bulk standard mailing distributed directly by the district office via the USPS must be deposited at a U.S. Bulk Mail Acceptance Center and must be accompanied by a completed Statement of Mailing form (PS 3602R or PS 3605R Priority Drop Shipment) a copy of which should be retained by the Member's office.
3. Bulk standard mail processed by mail houses for distribution via the USPS will be accounted for on a Statement of Mailing form.
4. The mail houses will notify USPS of the charges incurred. Members should request that the mail houses provide an informational copy of these charges on PS 3602R forms directly to the Member. This will help in the completion of the

quarterly mass mailing report Members submit to the Finance Office.

See Mail Preparation (32).

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USPS Franked Mail Monthly Statement

1. The Office of Finance completes a monthly summary of postage charges of Franked mail not otherwise reported on a PS 3605R or PS 3602R, and will forward this summary to the USPS by the seventh working day following the end of the month.
2. Each month the USPS will prepare a USPS Franked Mail Monthly Statement listing the postage expenses of all Franked mail incurred in that month. The USPS will forward this statement directly to the Office of Finance for payment from the MRA and will provide an informational copy to the Member's Washington, D.C., congressional office.
3. Members should immediately reconcile this USPS statement with their copies of bills. If any discrepancies exist, please contact the Finance Office.

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USPS Notice of Balance

On a monthly basis, the USPS will send the Member and Postal Operations a notice of the amount used for official mail.

The Postmaster general may not deliver official mail the cost of which is in excess of the authorized MRA.

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Mail Preparation

Ordinary and necessary expenses associated with the printing and preparation of Member correspondence are reimbursable. Franking expenses associated with all mailings will be deducted from the MRA.

See Bulk Mailings (29 & 31).

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Mailing Lists

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to the procurement and production of mailing lists may be reimbursed under the following circumstances: the list contains information about individuals within the Member's district; the list was procured or compiled as a result of a bona fide arms length marketplace transaction; and the list does not contain any campaign, campaign related, or political party information.

Members may not purchase or acquire mailing lists from their campaign offices unless the lists are available on the same terms to other entities through an arms length marketplace transaction. Official mailing lists may not be shared with a Member's campaign committee, any other campaign entity, or otherwise be used for campaign purposes.

39 U.S.C. § 2910 prohibits Members from sending any mass mailings outside of the district from which elected. Refer to the Franking Regulations.

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Inside Mail

1. Inside Mail is a delivery service for the transmittal of inter-office communications provided by House Postal Operations, pursuant to the regulations established by the Committee on House Administration. Inside mail service is available among offices in the Capitol, the House and Senate Office Buildings, the Library of Congress, the White House, the State Department, and the Social Security Administration.

2. Inside mail is provided to support the conduct of the official business of Members, committees, Officers of the House, and Congressional Staff Organizations.

3. Inside mail service may not be used to circulate letters which are personal or campaign-related, or which constitute commercial advertising except when postage is paid for with personal expenses.

4. All mail to be delivered via inside mail should be clearly marked Inside Mail and should be deposited in an Inside Mailbox.

5. Authorized items for circulation of inside mail include:

a. A Dear Colleague or similar correspondence relating to the official and representational business of the Member. This correspondence must be on official letterhead and signed by the Member.

b. A position paper, report, legislative analysis, or any material published or produced by another individual or organization that a Member wishes to circulate. This correspondence must be accompanied by a signed cover letter, on official letterhead. A copy of the cover letter must be attached to each item to be distributed.

c. Franked mail.

d. Stamped mail.

e. Mail for which a delivery fee has been paid.

f. Mail in a reusable blue U.S. House of Representatives Inside Mail envelope.

g. Mail produced by Congressional Staff Organizations registered with the Committee on House Administration.

Dear Colleague letters and similar correspondence must be transmitted to House Postal Operations, in the appropriate quantity, with a cover letter signed by the Member, indicating to whom the mailing should be distributed. For information regarding these procedures, contact House Postal Operations at x53856.

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Newspaper Inserts

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to the production and distribution of newspaper inserts are reimbursable. The content must be in compliance with the Franking Regulations.

There are certain election-related restrictions on mass communications.

See Unsolicited Mass Communication Restrictions (35).

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Postal Expenses

Postal expenses incurred only when the Frank is insufficient, such as certified, registered, insured, express, foreign mail, and stamped, self-addressed envelopes related to the recovery of official items, are reimbursable. Postage may not be used in lieu of the Frank. All mailings initiated by a Member must be in compliance with the Franking Regulations.

Members must return unused postage stamps to the Office of Postal Operations at the end of a Member's service in the House.

Contact the Committee on House Administration at x58281.

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Printing and Production

Printed materials produced by the Member are reimbursable when they are in compliance with the Franking Regulations. Reimbursable printing and production expenses include, but are not limited to:

1. Newsletters, postal patron mailings, mass mailings, notices of town hall meetings or notices of personal appearance of the Member at an official event
 2. Administrative papers (casework tracking forms, personnel record forms, etc.)
 3. Legislative papers (bills, drafts, summaries, amendments, etc.)
 4. Business cards for Members and their employees
 5. Stuffing, sealing, and associated expenses relating to printing and sending official mail
- If printed materials are to be sent under the Frank, a written advisory may be required.
- See Use of the Frank (28) and Unsolicited Mass Communication Restrictions (35).

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Stationery

Ordinary and necessary expenses associated with the printing and production of official stationery are reimbursable. Official stationery may be procured from the Government Printing Office (44 U.S.C. §734).

Contact the Congressional Printing Management Division at 202-512-0224 and the Office of Publication Services at x51908 for stationery requests.

Additional stationery requests (writing paper, bond, etc.) are reimbursable.

Samples of such stationery are available from the Office of Publication Services.

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Appearance

Official stationery must contain the following information:

1. Member's name
2. Member's district and state
3. Congress of the United States, House of Representatives, or comparable language

Official stationery may not contain the following information:

1. Seals other than the Great Seal, Congressional Seal, or State Seal
2. Member's political party identification

3. Slogans

4. Private entity information or endorsement

5. Campaign contact information (e.g. address, phone number, e-mail address)

6. Greetings

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Use

Official stationery may be used only for a letter or other document the content of which complies with the Franking Regulations. Contact the Franking Commission at x59337 for information on content of official correspondence.

Contact the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct at x57103 for information on the use of official stationery.

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Business Cards

Ordinary and necessary expenses for business cards for Members and employees are reimbursable. The content of business cards must comply with the Franking Regulations. Business cards must contain the name of the employing authority and accurately describe the position to which the employee has been appointed.

Business cards may be obtained through Office Supply Service x53321.

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Unsolicited Mass Communication Restrictions

Unsolicited mass communication is defined consistent with Franking Regulations as any unsolicited communication of substantially identical content to 500 or more persons in a session of Congress.

Except where noted, unsolicited mass communications, regardless of the means of transmittal, must receive an Advisory opinion from the Franking Commission, prior to dissemination. Advisory Opinions may be obtained from the Franking Commission at x59337.

Expenditures from the MRA for unsolicited mass communications, regardless of the means of transmittal, are prohibited if such communication occurs fewer than 90 days immediately before the date of any primary or general election (whether regular, special, or runoff) in which the Member's name will appear on an official ballot for election or re-election to public office.

Examples of unsolicited mass communications are:

1. Radio, TV, internet, or newspaper advertisements of town hall meetings or of a personal appearance of the Member and/or the Member's employees at an official event
2. Mass mailings
3. Newspaper inserts
4. Mass automated phone calls
5. Mass Facsimiles
6. Posters, flyers, leaflets, handouts, etc., that are distributed as mass communications
7. Radio programs aired on broadcast time purchased with official funds
8. Video or audio communication for which official funds are expended for production and distribution
9. Mass e-mail communications distributed to a non-subscribed e-mailing list

This restriction does not apply to the following:

1. Direct responses to communications (solicited communications)
2. Communications to Members of Congress and other government officials
3. News releases, press releases, or media releases (written or recorded communications from Members, directed at the news media), in any format. Note that expenses for production and transmittal are reimbursable; expenses for satellite downlink and broadcast are not reimbursable.
4. Web sites (including a Member's official web site) and other electronic bulletin boards on which information is posted for voluntary public access
5. Advertisements for employee position and internship openings, U.S. Military Academy Days, and An Artistic Discovery
6. Member's participation in a media hosted interview or program
7. Previously recorded programs and public service announcements aired at the discretion of a media outlet, when no expenses are incurred by the Member
8. Purchases of research materials, including videotapes, audiotapes, and other electronic media
9. Video conferencing services
10. Mass e-mail communications distributed to a subscribed e-mailing list.

Please see Electronic Communications.

Web Sites

World Wide Web sites paid for with official funds (Web sites) are a series of centrally maintained Web pages, accessible to the public via the Internet and stored on a specific host. The home page is the first accessible page for that site.

1. Ordinary and necessary expenses associated with the creation and continued operation of Web sites, in support of the Member's official and representational duties, are reimbursable.
2. Member's Web sites must be located in the HOUSE.GOV host-domain and may be maintained by either House Information Resources (HIR), the Member's congressional office, or a private vendor.
3. Member's Web sites may link to Committee Web sites, but Committee Web sites may not be located on Web sites paid for by the MRA.
4. Congressional Member Organizations (CMOs) may not create or operate independent Web sites. Members may include information within their Web site about CMO issues and activities. All CMO references within a Web site must relate to the Member's official and representational duties.
5. HIR will display an exit notice stating that users are leaving the House of Representatives prior to linking to a non-House of Representatives Web site. The exit notice will include a disclaimer that neither Members nor the House are responsible for the content of linked sites. Member offices maintaining their sites on the Public web server are required to incorporate the exit notice into their external links.
6. Web sites should be ADA compliant.

See Contractors (7).

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Content

The content of a Member's Web site:

1. May not include personal, political, or campaign information.
2. May not be directly linked or refer to Web sites created or operated by a campaign or any campaign related entity including political parties and campaign committees.
3. May not include grassroots lobbying or solicit support for a Member's position.
4. May not generate, circulate, solicit, or encourage signing petitions.
5. May not include any advertisement for any private individual, firm, or corporation, or imply in any manner that the government endorses or favors any specific commercial product, commodity, or service.

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Name (URL)

The URL name for an official Web site located in the HOUSE.GOV domain must be recognizably derivative or representative of the name of the Member or the name of the office sponsoring the Web site.

The URL name for an official Web site located in the HOUSE.GOV domain may not:

1. Be a slogan.
2. Imply in any manner that the House endorses or favors any specific commercial product, commodity, or service.

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Security

All House systems and devices with connections to the Internet must comply with network and security guidelines of the Committee on House Administration. These guidelines include the following:

1. Offices must send a written request for access to Internet services to HIR. Technical requirements will be provided to each office by HIR.
2. All users authorized to access the Internet must have unique identifiers and password security.
3. Users must immediately report any unauthorized access or unusual system activities to HIR Security Office (x66448). HIR will investigate any breaches of the Internet security system.
4. Internet access will be installed only after determination by HIR that anti-virus software has been installed on the Member's computer system.

Users with current anti-virus software provided by the House and installed on in-office computers may download software, patches, and fixes. Users are responsible for complying with any legal or contractual requirements from the owners of the software that is downloaded. Users should upgrade the anti-virus software as directed by HIR.

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Equipment

For all questions relating to equipment and equipment-related issues, refer to the User's Guide to Purchasing Equipment, Software, and Related Services, available from the Committee on House Administration.

Routine administrative requests (equipment, computer services, etc.) should be directed to the appropriate administrative offices under the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). For further information relating to any of the CAO's services, please refer to the CAO's Web site on the Intranet (<http://onlinecao.house.gov/>) or call First Call/One Call at x58000.

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Travel

General

Travel by Members, Members' employees, and vendors in support of the official and representational duties of that Member to the district from which elected is official travel.

Ordinary and necessary expenses associated with official travel are reimbursable.

Official travel includes local travel and travel away from home overnight to conduct official and representational duties, when returning to the duty station or residence is impractical.

Living expenses and commuting expenses are not reimbursable. Living expenses include meals, housing, and other personal expenses incurred at the Member or employee's residence or duty station. Commuting expenses are transportation expenses incurred by the Member or employees between their residence and duty station.

Official travel, paid for with the MRA, may not be for personal, political, campaign, or committee purposes.

Official travel cannot originate from or terminate at a campaign event. Official travel may not be combined with or related to travel or travel-related expenses paid for with campaign funds.

Official travel may not exceed 60 consecutive days.

Members have two duty stations: their Congressional District and Washington, D.C.

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Vendor Official Travel

Official travel also includes travel by a vendor when traveling to provide service or training to Member offices.

A vendor is an employee of a private company that provides maintenance and support for equipment and software (computer and non-computer) under a valid House contract or working on a time and material basis.

All travel costs must be negotiated and agreed upon in writing by both parties prior to vendor travel. Offices are encouraged to utilize the federal government per diem rates established by the General Services Administration for vendor travel costs as a benchmark. For a listing of the per diem rates by state and locality, see <http://policyworks.gov/org/main/mt/homepage/mtt/perdiem/travel.shtml>

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Unexpected Official Travel

Official travel includes travel to an official point from a location visited on personal travel, if the travel to the official point is necessitated by an unexpected official and representational duty (e.g. previously unscheduled House vote, natural disaster, or civil disorder). In such cases, return travel to the point of personal destination is considered official and reimbursable.

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Combined Travel

Combined travel is travel by a Member or their employees for the primary purpose of supporting the official and representational duties of the member, but includes an intervening destination or an additional time period that is included for personal purposes.

Combined travel requires that:

1. The primary purpose of the travel must be official and representational. The personal segment of the combined travel may not be purchased at a government rate or be purchased with a Government Travel Card.
2. The traveler seeks reimbursement for either the government rate of the direct route and means to the destination required for official and representational business, or the actually traveled fare, whichever is less.
3. The traveler personally pays any additional expenses incurred as a result of the personal travel.
4. The traveler attaches a brief memo to the voucher submitted for combined travel reimbursement, stating that the official travel and personal travel was combined for personal convenience.

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Official Travel Expenses

Official travel expenses including transportation, lodging, meals (excluding alcohol), fees (parking, tolls, ticket change fees, etc.), and other ordinary and necessary incidental expenses while on official travel status are reimbursable.

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Shared Official Travel Expenses

Official travel expenses may be shared by more than one Member or Committee office. The division of expenses must accurately reflect each traveler's expenses, and offices may only pay for the expenses of the Member, staff, and authorized vendors.

See Government Travel Card (43). See Town Hall meetings (22).

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Chartered Aircraft

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to chartering an aircraft for official travel are reimbursable when:

1. Passengers are restricted to Members, their employees, and their immediate family members (spouse, child, parent), the names of whom must be stated on the voucher.
2. If an immediate family member uses a chartered aircraft the Member may seek reimbursement for the full cost of the chartered aircraft and the family member must submit a check to the Office of Finance payable to the U.S. Treasury equivalent to the cost of a comparable commercial first class fare. A letter explaining the reason for its submission must accompany the check.

See Disbursements (42).

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Corporate or Private Aircraft

A Member and/or their employees who travel via corporate, business, or privately owned aircraft in support of the conduct of official and representational duties must reimburse the entity providing the flight, for the fair market value of the flight. To determine the fair market value of such a flight, apply the following:

1. When the travel is via a previously or regularly scheduled flight by the corporation, business, or individual, the entity must be reimbursed based on the cost of a commercial first class flight to the nearest location served by a commercial passenger airline. If only coach rates are provided at the nearest location, the Member must reimburse the cost of a commercial coach rate.

2. When the flight is scheduled specifically for Member use, payment will be made based on the cost of an equivalent commercial chartered flight to that location.

Prior to scheduling travel provided by any corporation, business, or individual, a Member or employee must verify that the person has authority under its FAA certification to accept payment for travel as set forth above. Contact the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct at x57103.

See Privately-Owned Vehicles (42).

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Government Rate Eligibility

Government rates are available to Members and employees to support the conduct of official travel.

To be eligible for Government rates when purchasing tickets for official travel, Members and employees may present:

1. The Government Travel Card.
2. An Official Travel Authorization (OTA) coupon available from the Finance Office. (Some airlines only allow the government rate for tickets purchased with the government travel card.)

Contact the General Services Administration (GSA) to obtain a listing of schedules and fares of the federal contract air, rail, and bus carriers, car rental companies, and hotels/motels.

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Officially Leased Vehicles

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to the lease of a vehicle in support of the conduct of official and representational duties are reimbursable.

Non-governmental use of such a vehicle may be made only when such use is:

1. During the course of and generally along the route of a day's official itinerary.
2. Incidental to the day's official and representational business.
3. De minimis in nature, frequency, and time consumed.
4. Does not otherwise constitute a significant activity or event.

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Short-Term

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to short-term vehicle rental are reimbursable. Rental may not exceed 60 consecutive days.

The government discount rates offered by some rental car companies include:

1. Unlimited free mileage.
2. Collision damage waiver (CDW) at no additional cost.

Cars rented at the government rate should include the CDW. Not all rental car franchises offer the government rate with CDW included. To ensure CDW coverage, offices can make their rental car reservations through the Combined Airlines Ticket Office (CATO). CATO is located at B-222 Longworth Building.

If an office does not use CATO then the Committee recommends the following:

1. At time of the reservation, indicate that the rental is for official government use at the government rate with CDW included.
2. At the time of rental, use the Government Travel Card (or present official travel authorizations (OTA) to the rental company) and confirm that the car is being rented at a government rate with CDW included. The employee must verify that collision damage waiver is included, as simply receiving the government rate does not automatically ensure inclusion of this insurance.

Offices may obtain an Official Travel Authorization coupon from the Finance Office.

If the government rate is unavailable the cost of CDW is reimbursable.

Personal accident insurance (PAI), personal effects coverage (PEC), and equivalent insurance policies are not reimbursable.

If an employee on official and representational business is involved in an accident with a rental car, notify the Office of General Counsel at x59700.

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Long-Term

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to a long-term rental or lease of a vehicle by a Member in the Member's District are reimbursable.

1. A Member has two leasing options:
 - a. A Member may lease a vehicle for a period that does not exceed the Member's congressional term.
 - b. The Member may lease a vehicle for a period that exceeds the current Congressional term, but must submit a signed letter that acknowledges personal responsibility to fulfill any outstanding obligation stemming from such a lease in the event the Member's service to the House ends prior to the lease agreement. Such letters should be attached to the negotiated lease and submitted to the Office of Administrative Counsel (102 Ford Building).

2. The Committee recommends that Members submit leases to the Administrative Counsel for review prior to being signed by the Member and lessor, since the Member is personally liable for payments under any lease not in compliance with House Rules and Committee regulations.

3. Termination notices should be forwarded to the Administrative Counsel.

4. Leases may not include a purchase option.

5. Lessor-required insurance may be reimbursed. Security deposits are not reimbursable.

6. The Committee recommends that long-term vehicle leases begin on the first day of the month.

7. Monthly payments for a long-term vehicle lease may be made in advance.

The House will authorize disbursement of funds under the terms of the lease agreement only if the lease agreement complies with the Rules of the House and the Regulations of the Committee on House Administration. The House will not authorize disbursement of funds to make payments under the terms of the lease agreement until the Administrative Counsel has reviewed the lease and has signed the Attachment.

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Expenses

Expenses related to leased vehicles (both short-term and long-term) including but not limited to the following are reimbursable:

1. The actual monthly cost of the lease (not applicable to short-term)

2. The cost of insurance incurred pursuant to the terms of the lease (not applicable to short-term)

3. Excess mileage charges incurred pursuant to the terms of the lease

4. Incidental operating expenses (gasoline, oil, general maintenance, etc.)

5. Wear and tear (not applicable to short-term)

6. Registration fees (not applicable to short-term)

7. Property tax during the term of the lease (not applicable to short-term)

Security deposits, termination fees, traffic violations, depreciation loss based on premature return, and similar fees, penalties or charges may not be reimbursed.

See Advance Payments (42).

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Privately-Owned Vehicles

The costs of transportation by Member or employee via a privately owned or privately leased vehicle while on official and representational business reimbursable on a rate per mile basis. The maximum rates per mile are:

Automobile: \$.445

Motorcycle: \$.305

Airplane: \$1.07

For the current applicable rates, contact the Committee on House Administration at x58281.

Only mileage for use of an aircraft that is privately owned by either a Member or the Member's employee is reimbursable.

See Disbursements (42) and Corporate or Private Aircraft (39).

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Travel Promotional Awards

Free travel, mileage, discounts, upgrades, coupons, etc., awarded at the sole discretion of a company as a promotional award may be used at the discretion of the Member or the Member's employee. The Committee encourages the official use of these travel promotional awards wherever practicable.

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Disbursements

Advance Payments

There are instances in which advance payments may be required and may be paid from the MRA. Unless specifically authorized by the Committee, only the following advance payments are reimbursable:

1. Public information booth rental
2. Educational expenses
3. Authorized insurance premiums
4. Newspaper and periodical subscriptions
5. Telecommunications devices
6. Post-office box rentals

7. Original Equipment Manufacturers' warranties
8. Monthly payments of a long-term automobile lease

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Authorized Methods of Payment

Official travel-related expenses may be paid with cash, check, personal credit card, etc., or the Government Travel Card for Members and employees and reimbursed through the Finance Office.

See Government Travel Card (43), Dues (16), and Disbursements (3).

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Reimbursement and Direct Payment

Disbursements from the MRA are paid on a reimbursable basis or by direct payment (to vendors) and require:

1. The Member's signature, certifying that the expense was incurred in support of the Member's official and representational duties to the district from which elected.
2. Supporting documentation (receipt, lease, bill etc.).

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Government Travel Card

The Government Travel Card is available for Member and employee use for official travel and travel-related expenses. Such travel expenses incurred on this or any other credit/charge card, are directly reimbursable to the traveler or to the cardholder with a copy of the credit card statement, an accompanying voucher, and applicable receipts. When reimbursement is to be made to the cardholder for expenses incurred by someone other than the cardholder, the description of services stated on the voucher must clearly identify the traveler and the expense incurred.

Members and employees are reminded that the Government Travel Card is for official travel purposes only. Use of this card for any personal or non-official purchases is prohibited. The Government Travel Card may be used by the cardholder only. The cardholder may use the card to purchase travel-related services (airline tickets, hotel expenses,

etc.) for other authorized travelers.

The Office of Finance will monitor the monthly aging report received from the vendor and alert offices of delinquencies. The Office of Finance will not intervene with the vendor in the event of a delinquency.

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Seeking Reimbursement: Vouchers

Requests for reimbursement or payment from the MRA must be submitted on a completed voucher to the Finance Office.

Each voucher must include the following:

1. Member's original signature
2. Dates of service(s) provided, or date of purchase
3. Detailed description of the expenses incurred
4. Payee (the party to whom the payment or reimbursement is being made). For payment to individuals, the payee's tax identification number or Social Security number must be included on the voucher. The payee may be one of the following:
 - a. Member
 - b. Member's employee
 - c. Designated vendor (this includes credit and charge card companies)
5. Supporting documentation (original invoices, original receipts, etc.)
6. Amount due

Member offices must provide the Office of Finance with original receipts, unless original receipts are unavailable. In such cases, Members may submit the voucher with the available documentation (e.g., copy of original credit card statement) and a signed certification stating: "I certify that this is a true copy. This is my only submission for payment."

In instances where original receipts are not provided (bus fares, pay phone calls, etc.) or for taxi fares under \$10.00 the information on the voucher is sufficient.

When submitting reimbursement for travel expenses, the voucher must also indicate the name of the traveler for whom the expenses were incurred.

The Committee strongly recommends that Member offices submit their vouchers for travel reimbursements at least fifteen days before the payment due date to assist the Office of Finance in providing timely reimbursements and prevent Members from incurring late fees or delinquency problems.

See Custodial Services (23), Educational Expenses (16), and Interpreting and Translating Services (18).

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Expired Appropriations

The Salaries and Expenses appropriation for the House of Representatives, which includes MRA funds, is withdrawn on September 30 two years after the year for which the funds were originally appropriated.

If an office requests reimbursement for an official and representational expense incurred during a year for which the appropriation has been withdrawn, the Office of Finance will determine if an amount sufficient to pay the expense would have been available if the appropriation had not been withdrawn. If no funds would have been available, then the expense is the personal liability of the Member.

If the expense would have been payable had it been timely submitted, notwithstanding the expired appropriation, then the expense may be paid from a currently available allowance.

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Congressional Member Organizations

General

Members of Congress may form a Congressional Member Organization (CMO) in order to pursue common legislative objectives.

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Registration

Each Congress, CMOs must register with the Committee on House Administration.

CMOs must provide the following information:

1. Name
2. Statement of Purpose
3. Officers of the CMO
4. Employee designated to work on issues related to the CMO

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Membership

Members of both the House and Senate may participate in CMO, but at least one of the Officers of the CMO must be a Member of the House. The participation of Senators in a CMO does not impact the scope of authorized CMO activities in any regard.

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Funding and Resources

CMOs have no separate corporate or legal identity. A CMO is not an employing authority. The MRA may not directly support a CMO as an independent entity. A CMO may not be assigned separate office space.

Neither CMOs nor individual Members may accept goods, funds, or services from private organizations or individuals to support the CMO. Members may use personal funds to support the CMO.

A Member of a CMO, in support of the objectives of that CMO, may utilize employees (including shared employees) and official resources under the control of the Member to assist the CMO in carrying out its legislative objectives, but no employees may be appointed in the name of a CMO.

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Communications

CMOs may not use the Frank, nor may a Member lend his or her Frank to a CMO.

A Member may use official resources for communications related to the purpose of a CMO. Any such communications must comply with the Franking Regulations.

Members may devote a section of their official Web site to CMO issues, but CMOs may not have independent Web pages.

A Member may use inside mail to communicate information related to a CMO.

Members may prepare material related to CMO issues for dissemination.

Official funds may not be used to print or pay for stationery for the CMO.

Members may refer to their membership in a CMO on their official stationery.

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Congressional Staff Organizations

General

A Congressional Staff Organization (CSO) is an organization, a majority of whose members are House employees, that exists for the purpose of facilitating interaction among congressional staff.

Each Congress, CSOs must register with the Committee on House Administration.

At least one officer of a CSO must be an employee of the House, and all officers must be employees of the House or Senate.

A CSO should contact the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct at x57103 before accepting anything of monetary value from a private source.

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Official Resources

Other than as specified in this section, House staff that participates in a CSO may make only incidental use of official resources for activities related to a CSO. A CSO is not an employing authority of the House and may not be assigned separate office space.

Each Congress, in order to use official resources of the House (i.e., inside mail, House Intranet, etc.), a CSO must register with the Committee on House Administration. A sponsoring Member must submit a letter, on official letterhead, to the Committee with the following information:

1. Name of the staff organization
2. Statement of purpose of the staff organization
3. Officers of the staff organization, including contact information
4. Specify which of the following resources the CSO requests use of:
 - a. Inside mail
 - b. House Intranet site
 - c. Postbox at House Postal Operations
5. Individuals designated to maintain web and mail services on behalf of the CSO (if applicable)

After the CSO is registered, the sponsoring Member may submit, at any time, a letter requesting access to Inside Mail, a House postbox, or a presence on the House Intranet for CSO related activities.

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